

SENTINEL SURVEILLANCE FOR INFLUENZA (THE FLU)- WHAT IS IT?

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is looking for partners to participate in sentinel surveillance for influenza (the flu).

What does that mean?

Participating providers submit between two and five specimens per week to the state public health lab, DCLS, for free influenza testing and subtyping.

Does the program cost anything?

No, this program is free for providers. You'll receive specimen collection and mailing kits. The supplies, mailing, and testing are all provided at no cost.

How does this benefit me?

DCLS will mail you the results of each specimen* and VDH will provide an aggregated report of all the specimens you've submitted. You'll be able to monitor when the flu season starts and what subtypes of the virus are circulating in your area.

How does this benefit public health?

A subset of the specimens you submit will be forwarded on to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for full genetic characterization. Public health will be able to identify any new versions of the virus, including novel strains and antiviral resistance. These characterized viruses also allow public health to monitor the evolution of the flu virus over time and to choose the most appropriate strains for the next season's flu vaccine.

How can I get involved?

Contact your [local health district](#) and ask for the flu coordinator. They can get you set up with testing supplies and more detailed instructions.

*Please note that these results are for surveillance rather than diagnostic purposes. Results are not available quickly enough for clinical decision making. You should continue to use your clinical testing and diagnosis process.

Sentinel surveillance is an integral part of VDH's efforts to prepare for and lessen the burden of both a potential flu pandemic and an expected flu season. By participating, you would be contributing to preparedness and saving lives through appropriate vaccine strain selection.

Thank you!

